



JANUARY 2024 – A NEW YEAR

As we walk into 2024, may we renew our commitment to the one resolution that makes all the difference in the life of an alcoholic: “We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol...”

May we renew our commitment to this principle: “one day at a time”

May we not take that first drink “just for today”

May we “practice these principles in all our affairs”

And may we “carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic”

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE
BETTER TIMES TEAM!

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How To Reach Us
Submit Group News, medallions, event notices, letters to the editor and articles to Better Times, before the 10th of the month prior to month of issue by email to bettertimes@aatoronto.org or contact Alexx at 416-487-8110

Letter from the Incoming Chair of the 2024 Operating Committee

Dear Members, Friends and Family of the GTA Alcoholics Anonymous:

My name is Jomana and I am an Alcoholic. I belong to the Stepping Stones Group and my sober date is May 03, 2014.

Joined by other equally dedicated service-oriented men and women, I am pleased to enter the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup Chair role. I am stepping into this role on the heels of a time of abnormal change for the fellowship. My predecessor, Marvyn W. from the Mississauga Group, carried the brunt of being of service to the AA fellowship during the Covid era and the subsequent migration to virtual meetings. On behalf of OC 2023 and 2024, I sincerely thank Marvyn for his strength and dedication. I hope to be graced with a fraction of his strength, spirit, and love of service.

I have a hopeful outlook for the 2024 Operating Committee (OC), particularly in two areas of significant change and challenge.

1. Gradually bring the Monthly Greater Toronto Area Intergroup Meetings back to in-person gatherings. To accomplish this, our first step will be to host a GTAI hybrid meeting that will provide a consistent experience for all intergroup representatives - regardless of in person or virtual participation. Having a viable online option will encourage participation and, eventually, a complete return to in-person meetings. Please be patient with me, the Operating Committee, and one another, as I anticipate that there will be some minor growing pains and frustrations.



2. Encourage service commitment from members and groups on levels other than home groups. One of the beautiful ripple effects of getting and staying sober is the chance to help others. To encourage the spirit of rotation, the 2024 Operating Committee (OC) will campaign to increase consistent membership in the different subcommittees directly serving the GTA AA fellowship. We have an array of incredibly sober, talented, capable people in the fellowship. It will be tremendously wonderful to see new faces, fresh takes, and visionary creativity in carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers and the one who is not, newcomers and long-timers alike. Eddy G. from the Beaches Group exceptionally stated this as “The 3 T’s: Time, Talent and Treasure”.

Being a sober member of AA has given me so many graces; I love this paragraph from the Big Book that captures it perfectly:

“There is no more aloneness, with that awful ache so deep in the heart of every alcoholic that nothing before could ever reach it. That ache is gone and never needs to return again. Now, there is a sense of belonging, of being wanted, needed, and loved. In return for a bottle and a hangover, we have been given the Keys of the Kingdom.” Alcoholics Anonymous – “The Keys of the Kingdom” Chapter 9 – pgs. 275-276.

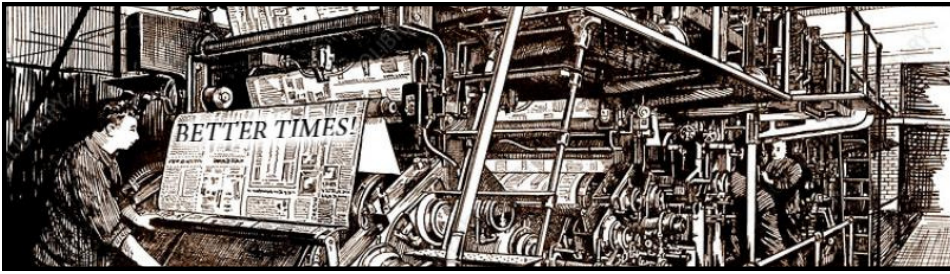
Truly Yours in Service (YIS), Jomana A.

It's the Little Things that Matter

We all have a need to make something out of our lives. To be recognized for something positive. It's a hunger that needs to be satisfied. It's in all of us. And when we don't reach our desired goals, we feel like a failure, cheated, unworthy. We question our own self-worth. It can leave us despondent.

It's been written that few people have it together. Few lives are to be admired. Each person has his or her setbacks. A person may have had success with a project. But that is no guarantee success will follow on his next projects. And because we reach a certain plateau of success, we feel our problems have been resolved. We must realize that once we reach that plateau, more problems will present themselves.

As Dr. Leo Buscaglia writes in his book *Personhood*, that talks about obtaining more wealth and power, – *Cont'd on page 04* –



Dear friends,

My name is Alice N. and I am an alcoholic. On December 31st, I celebrated 4 years of continuous sobriety. I am truly grateful to my Higher Power and Alcoholics Anonymous for showing me a better way of living.

As the editor of our beloved magazine, I am well aware of the evolving needs of our diverse readers and the importance of providing relevant, insightful, and inspiring content. Therefore, it is my pleasure to share with you our vision for this new year.

- **Your Stories Matter: A Call for Submissions.** Our community is diverse, and so are our stories of recovery. In this new year, we are actively seeking a diverse range of content contributors so that we can continue to foster connection and community within our GTA AA community. Whether you're a newcomer or old timer with many years of sobriety under your belt, your story can uplift and empower others. Please consider sharing your experience, strength and hope with your fellow readers. We'd truly love to publish your story. *Please scan the QR Code at the end of this article and you will be directed to an anonymous content submission form.*

- **Themed Editions:** In this new year, you can expect to

see themed monthly issues. For instance, the theme for this issue is *New Beginnings*. The February 2024 Issue will be focused on *Mental Health and Sobriety*. We hope that by publishing themed issues, we will offer you - our beloved readers - a richer and more engaging experience. If you would like to contribute an article for consideration for the February 2024 Issue, please scan the QR Code at the end of this article and you will be directed to an anonymous content submission form.

- **Growth:** As we expand our content and community engagement initiatives, I also recognize the need for dedicated individuals to help in the growth of our publication. Whether you have a background in writing, editing, graphic design, or simply have a desire to contribute, you are welcome! Your insights, skills, and commitment will play a crucial role in shaping the content and direction of our magazine. Please reach out to me via email at alice@aatoronto.org to further discuss how you could be of service.

In conclusion, I invite you to join us in our efforts to incrementally improve our publication in this new year. Your experiences, strength and hope inspire me every day to continue being of service to our community. I am truly blessed to be a recovering alcoholic.

-Alice N.



GTAI/DISTRICT - JANUARY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

To attend one of the meetings, simply request by email below-

Accessibilities - Sun. Jan. 21 – 11 a.m.

ID: 824 8962 1874 - PW: 799763

Archives - Fri. Jan. 12 – 8 p.m.

ID: 841 5376 9412 - PW: 018851

Communications - Tues. Jan. 16 – 8 p.m.

ID: 850 5256 7237 - PW: 984555

CPC/PI - Mon. Jan. 15 – 7 p.m.

ID: 854 7547 0291 - PW: 002060

Correctional Facilities - Tues. Jan. 02 – 7 p.m.

ID: 883 8002 9737 - PW: 950392

Self-Support - Thurs. Jan. 25 – 6:30 p.m.

ID: 820 9238 0206 - PW: 319853

Treatment - Thurs. Jan. 18, 2024 – 7 p.m.

ID: 868 2207 4860 - PW: 787289

Twelfth Step - Wed. Jan. 10 – 7 p.m.

ID: 813 0646 6967 - PW: 572531

IT Subcommittee - Tues. Jan. 09 - 7 p.m.

ID: 814 0942 9019 - PW: 379691

Information AA Day - Mon. Jan. 22 - 7 p.m.

ID: 811 8277 5978 - PW: 587553

Become a Helpline Phone Greeter

How? It's simple. Just ask at: (416) 487-5591



NEW BEGINNINGS

Five years ago today I was on a crash course towards my own rock bottom. I was beginning to awaken to my alcoholism, however I was stuck somewhere between denial and acceptance. By December of 2018 I was drunk every day, starting from the moment I woke up to the time I went to sleep at night.

My mom had expressed concerns surrounding my drinking, and asked that I not drink at our family Christmas that year. I was so consumed by the disease that I chose to skip Christmas that year so I could stay home and with a bottle. Shortly after New Years of 2019, and a few more drinking related mishaps later, I had finally had enough of myself. I no longer recognized the person looking back at me in the mirror. The young woman who used to value her friends and family now chose the bottle over everything good in her life.

During this time I was experiencing thoughts of suicide and that's when a miracle happened. I found myself in the rooms of AA in early January thanks to a manager at work who I had confided in. And on January 13th 2019, I made the decision to pick up the desire chip. Looking back, I see now that I had the gift of desperation that I had heard so much about. I had two choices: to open my mind and try the AA way of life, or surely die from the disease of alcoholism.

I was always a person of habit, and I did not like change. I was also incredibly reserved, shy, and full of self loathing. But within the rooms of AA, I became willing to listen and try doing things differently because my way was not working. The good people of AA were patient, welcoming and willing to share their own experiences. Experiences much like my own. I knew that I had found home.

I have experienced many new beginnings and blessings in my life since then. The fellowship has lovingly pushed me to do things I never thought I could do. From shaking hands at the door, to chairing meetings, speaking at open meetings, taking other women through the steps, and serving my group as GSR, I have had the ultimate new beginning in my life.

All of these things have helped me to expand and grow in my career and personal life as well. The girl who couldn't speak to a room full of people or sober up long enough for a job interview, now gives weekly presentations at a corporate job where I am trusted with overseeing my own team. I came into AA expecting to get my life back. Instead I was given a new life beyond my wildest dreams, and the absolute blessing of being able to share with others - like myself - that they can do it too.

Gratefully, Alison L. - Lakeshore Group

haveyouheard



**FAREWELL
2023...
HELLO 2024!**

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE 2024 ORC ORGANIZING COMMITTEE!

Wow, there's so much to look forward to this year!

Love or hate the winter, spring is just around the corner and that means so is the 2024 ORC! The dates are March 15-17. We're so looking forward to celebrating recovery with you then.

But don't wait — January is the month to get your ticket if you want to win a FREE hotel room for 2 nights!

Wait, a FREE hotel room?



That's right! (And a \$100 The Keg Gift Card too!)

Each ticket purchased by Feb 1, 2024 will be entered into a random draw which will be picked on Feb 9, 2024. The winner will receive a \$100 The Keg Gift Card and be given a free hotel room for the nights of Fri, March 15 and Sat, March 16. Register now for your chance to win!

General admission tickets are \$55. (This gets you in the draw.)

Banquet tickets are \$105.

The discounted hotel rate is \$215/night + HST.

Visa/MC Credit & Debit are accepted.

Register online at: aaorc.ca



March 15-17 is just around the corner, and we can't wait to see you!

Yours in Love and Service,

Adam W. (Prince Edward Group)
Promotions Chair
2024 ORC Organizing Committee

P.S. We also have a massive need for volunteer greeters. Being a greeter is a great opportunity to make friends, make a difference, and enhance your ORC experience with the Power of giving back. You can sign-up as a greeter at the same place as you buy tickets: aaorc.ca

--- CELEBRATING RECOVERY THROUGH THE 12 STEPS ---

Join our potluck event on **Saturday, February 3, 2024**. Please bring a hot or cold potluck food item. The event features 12 speakers from AA, Al-Anon and Alateen. **Tickets** are \$10 each and \$5 for Alateen, and include: Potluck lunch, Door prizes, 50/50 draw, Basket raffle.

Registration opens at 8:30 am. Starts at 9:00 am, and goes till 4:00 pm.

Location: Unifor Banquet Hall at 23 Regan Road, Brampton
For tickets, questions or to make a 7th tradition contribution, please email: crttts17@gmail.com

Any other questions, please call Wendy at (416) 409-3873

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TWELFTH STEP COMMITTEE

URGENT CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Twelfth Step Committee is looking for volunteers who:

Are willing and able to answer the 24/7 AA Toronto Help Line phones from 9:30 P.M. to 9:00 A.M.

Speak more than one language

Can commit to at least one shift per month

Please Contact:
12step@aatoronto.org

JANUARY MEDALLIONS

Andy S., Erin Mills Group, 15 yrs. Jan. 01

Terry R., Willowdale Shephard Group, 5 yrs. Jan. 04

Barb J., High Park Group, 5 yrs. Jan. 07

Jonathan G., Friendly Group, 1 yr. Jan. 08

Shawn M., High Park Group, 30 yrs. Jan. 14

Sharon M., Mississauga Group, 30 yrs. Jan. 14

Danielle C., Erin Mills Group, 1 yr., Jan. 15

Frank C., High Park Group, 20 yrs, Jan. 20

Andrew K., Golden Mile Group, 30 yrs, Jan. 22

Demar P., Fifth Tradition Group, 1 yr. Jan. 29



IS THERE AN UPCOMING MEDALLION?

Please send your medallion details to

bettertimes@aatoronto.org

in the format of:

name - homegroup - year(s) of sobriety - medallion date

Kindly note that Better Times only publishes the first year of continuous sobriety birthday celebrations or every subsequent 5th year of continuous sobriety (i.e. 1, 5, 10, 15, 20...)

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ARCHIVES CORNER

ORC & AA Toronto Celebrate 81 Years of Service!

In January 1940, Rev. George Little, a minister of the United Church & a non-alcoholic, read a review of the Big Book by the Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick. He was so impressed that he ordered a copy from New York & mimeographed copies to give to people with drinking problems & to other interested parties.

On Wednesday January 13, 1943, the 1st meeting was held in Toronto, Canada. Two friends of alcoholics, the Reverends George Little and Percy Price, along with six alcoholics -Tom E., Bruce M., Sam McC., Buzz McT., Dorothy C and Weems C., met at the Little Denmark Restaurant at 720 Bay St. in Toronto. Something special happened that day.

On Thursday, January 28, 1943, the first organized A.A. meeting was held at the Metropolitan United Church House. Six people attended. In a matter of just two weeks the attendance at the meeting had tripled. On February 25, 15 were present & Dorothy C., the first woman in A.A. in Canada, attended the meeting. On March 18, 12 people were present including 2 women.

On June 12, 1943, the meeting moved to 160 Bloor Street East to the newly acquired Club Room & 25 people were in attendance. *Alcoholics Anonymous was launched in Canada.*

On December 16, 1943, in gratitude for this new found sobriety, a dinner was held in Toronto at the Royal York Hotel. There were 80 people in attendance including newly minted members of Alcoholics Anonymous along with family members and other supporters of sobriety. Today, we know this dinner as the Ontario Regional Conference (ORC) Banquet. *On March 15-17, 2024 the Ontario Regional Conference will be celebrating 81 years.*

On January 28, 1944, as a result of the rapid growth of A.A. in its first year, Toronto members rented a building at 1170 Yonge Street.

In September 1945, "growing pains" was the reason that a second AA group was formed. On October 9, 1945, a Women's Group formed at a house meeting.

In 1946, Earl McI. & Tom G. came up with the idea of the AA Medallions. The 5 & 10 year colours came later.

In October, 1947, there were ten groups in Toronto and the first Central Committee (today GTA Intergroup) was formed at "1170" Yonge with first operating procedures drawn up by Glen G. In 1960, The Central Committee became Toronto Intergroup.

On October 31, 1995, Toronto Intergroup became the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup.

Taken from the *75 Years of A.A. in Ontario* Booklet by Peter N. (Bayview Group) & Eddy G. (Beaches Group) & also from *AA History Timeline* by Tommy H. (Unionville Group) - Eddy G. GTA Archivist



Use the QR code to access more "Better Times" issues!

TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO ARCHIVES PLEASE CONTACT ARCHIVIST EDDY G. 416-536-7536 or archives@aatoronto.org OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED FOR THE ARCHIVES.

Did you Know?

1. In Jan. 1939, after writing of the Big Book began, it was evident that something more was needed in the form of a story or case history section. It would be living proof to identify with the distant reader in a way the text itself might not. Akron produced 18 stories thanks to the efforts of journalist Jim S. whose Big Book story is "The News Hawk." He interviewed the Akron members & wrote their stories (Dr. Bob wrote his own). Two stories came from Cleveland & one from non-alcoholic Marie B. whose Big Book story is "An Alcoholics Wife." NY members contributed ten stories that were edited by Bill W. & Hank P. over the contributor's protests. The story section was completed by late January.

2. In 1945 Bill W. was called by Barry L., later author of "Living Sober;" from the 41st St. Clubhouse in NY. Bill persuaded the group to take in a black man who was an ex-convict with bleach-blond hair, wearing women's clothing & makeup. The man also admitted to being a "dope fiend." when asked what to do about, Bill posed the question, "did you say he was a drunk?" When answered, "yes" Bill replied, "well I think that's all we can ask." The man was reported to have disappeared shortly after.

3. On Jan. 24, 1971, at 11:30 pm William Griffith Wilson (Bill Wilson), age 75, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, 36 years sober (sobriety date December 11, 1934), died (of emphysema, although sometimes described as heart failure, complicated by pneumonia) at Miami Heart Institute, Miami Beach, FL. The date was also Bill and Lois 53rd wedding anniversary. Bill was the architect & author of AA's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity & Service & all the written works that explained them. It was an amazing achievement. He had no training at all as a writer. On Jan. 26, 1971 The New York Times published Bill Wilson's obituary on page one. Bill's name, picture, and story carried world-wide in public media for the first time. In 1990, Life Magazine named Bill one of the 100 most important figures of the 20th century.

It's the Little Things - cont from front page -
"we simply have acquired new anxieties and different doubts." And as Oscar Wilde writes, "there are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants and the other is getting it."

But for many of us, the challenge isn't achieving goals but rather finding direction. A purpose to live for. There's nothing wrong with this attitude. But it's the little things that matter as well. At this time, we would be wise to listen to the words of a famous Emily Dickinson's poem:

*If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain,
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin,
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.*

How many of us have given a warm smile to someone who may be hurting? Bought a sandwich and coffee to a homeless person? Opened a door for a complete stranger? It's the little things that matter.

I recently went out to lunch with some friends. One person had no money. He was going to watch us eat and I felt bad. So, I treated him to a coffee. One lady offered him some of her French Fries. Another bought him a salad. It was no big deal on my part. But we made him feel part of our group. And he was grateful. Maybe one day, he will return the favour.

We all have something to offer and it doesn't have to cost "an arm and a leg." There are many hurting, lonely people out there who need our attention. As it states in the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi: "for it is in the giving that we receive."

Ken M.